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Sustainable development

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the summary of the international conference on the theme "Chernobyl 20 years after: strategy for recovery and sustainable development of the affected regions" (Minsk, 19-21 April 2006) (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

(*Signed*) Andrei **Dapkiunas**
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* A/61/50 and Corr.1.

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Annex to the letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

International Conference "Chernobyl 20 years after: strategy for recovery and sustainable development of the affected regions" 19-21 April 2006 Minsk

The present Conference was convened in order to achieve the following objectives:

- Dissemination of experience of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and elaboration of recommendations for an action strategy for the coming decade;
- Consideration of the results of scientific research and practical recommendations for the effective management of the situation following the Chernobyl accident;
- Exchange of positive experience of pursuing a socially oriented policy and the fostering of cooperation with international organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations to implement a new strategy for solving the problems of Chernobyl, aimed at the full restoration of living conditions in the contaminated regions;
- The support of the international community for the efforts of the affected countries to establish a normal way of life in the regions concerned;
- The involvement of new partners in the international Chernobyl-related cooperative effort, the introduction of new international Chernobyl-related programmes and projects and the attraction of funds from the international donor community for the rehabilitation of the contaminated regions.

Twenty years after the Chernobyl accident, it is possible to weigh up in a relatively full and balanced way its consequences and the effectiveness of countermeasures taken.

In the immediate aftermath of the accident, the absence of data on the level of radioactivity and of knowledge about the effect of radiation on the human body and radiation safety prevented many specialists and, even more, ordinary people, from grasping its true impact. As a result, the subjective perception of the consequences of the accident and the specific actions flowing from it did not always reflect the real state of affairs.

In recent years, in parallel with the conduct of large-scale protective measures, the environmental contamination by radionuclides was studied in detail; the doses received by the population were ascertained; and a large volume of often contradictory data was presented concerning the consequences of the Chernobyl accident for people's health.

Despite the continuing disputes, today it has become clear that the Chernobyl accident radically changed the lives of many people, especially in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Such occurrences as relocation, restrictions on agricultural and industrial output and the release of contradictory information about the possible consequences of the accident, coupled with the decline of the economic situation and the collapse of the USSR, changed their way of life and made a negative imprint on their psychology and outlook. All this, taken together, turned the accident into a true catastrophe for millions of people.

Having heard and considered the contents of national reports and surveys, the outcome of sectional meetings and the conclusions of international organizations that studied the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the Conference reached a joint understanding of the consequences of the accident, the effectiveness of the reaction and the persisting problems, and drew up the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant caused radioactive contamination of the environment that greatly exceeded acceptable levels of radiation safety over a vast area. The contaminated area covered:

46,500 sq. km (23 per cent) of the territory of Belarus;

43,500 sq. km (7 per cent) of the territory of Ukraine;

59,700 sq. km (1.5 per cent) of the territory of European Russia.

The fallout of radionuclides was extremely irregular in terms of content, time and place. The effect of short-lived radionuclides (iodine-131, barium-140 and lanthanium-140) lasted for a relatively short period (weeks) after the accident. Even that, however, accounted for a significant part of the radiation doses of the population. Contamination by iodine-131 was observed over a vast area, including territory situated a significant distance from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The Baltic countries, Poland, Hungary, Georgia and other countries all suffered. This iodine "assault" led to a marked growth in diseases of the thyroid gland, especially in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia.

The greater part of the most dangerously radioactive long-lived radionuclides (strontium-90 and transuranium elements such as isotopes of plutonium and americium) was localized in the vicinity of the destroyed reactor. The population was evacuated from this zone, but the effects of the contamination will have a substantial impact on the ecosystems for many centuries. For an extended period, the return of the population to this area will be impossible, and extreme caution will have to be exercised regarding its use for agricultural purposes.

2. The predominant part of the radionuclides that fell on the ground currently lies in the top layers of the soil. The downward leaching of caesium-137 and strontium-90 occurs very slowly. The average speed is 0.3-0.5 cm/year, posing almost no threat to the water-bearing level.

In soils with a high content of clay, the proportion of caesium-137 that can be absorbed by plants has fallen since 1986 and does not exceed 5 per cent. In turf, podzols, sandy and peaty soils, the proportion is 10-20 per cent. Most of the radionuclides are in bound form. For strontium-90, the proportion in forms that can be absorbed amounts to 70 per cent in turf and podzols and 50 per cent in peat. The

absorbable forms of plutonium and americium account for 10 per cent and 13 per cent respectively.

Thus, over a significant area of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia there is a vast build-up of slow-moving radionuclides which, in the course of many decades, will seriously harm the environment and jeopardize agricultural production.

3. Most of the radioactive fallout occurred in the water-catchment areas of the Dnieper and Pripyat rivers and their tributaries. During the first few years after the accident, the flushing of radionuclides from these areas constituted the most significant secondary source of environmental contamination.

At the present time, now that the radiation situation has stabilized, the flow of radionuclides from water-catchment areas is significant only in the case of those rivers whose catchment areas lie partially or completely within the 30-km zone surrounding the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The flow of radionuclides, especially strontium-90, is greatly increased in time of flood. Radionuclides are carried by the surface waters of the Pripyat river across the border into Ukrainian territory. In the case of the Iput' and Besed' rivers (Russia-Belarus), the cross-border flow does not exceed 1 per cent of the total caesium-137 content of their water-catchment areas.

Because of the water-transfer processes, the accumulation of suspended particles on the bed of water bodies and natural decay, caesium-137 concentrations in large and medium-sized rivers have greatly diminished. However, the radioactivity of caesium-137 and strontium-90 in the surface waters of most rivers being monitored still exceeds the levels preceding the accident.

In enclosed and slow-flowing, lake-type water systems, because of the flow of radionuclides from water-catchment areas, the total radioactivity of caesium-137 and strontium-90 in surface waters approximates to — but in a number of instances exceeds — the health standard (in the Republic of Belarus, for caesium-137, it is 10 Becquerels per litre (Bq/l), and for strontium-90, 0.37 Bq/l). Lakes, reservoirs and drainage systems are characterized by high accumulations of caesium-137 in bottom deposits (up to 49 kBq/kg).

At the present time, isotopes of caesium-137 and strontium-90 have not been found in groundwater boreholes being monitored in inhabited areas contaminated by radionuclides.

4. Radioactive contamination of air masses remains an urgent problem overall in the exclusion zone of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and the surrounding area. An insignificant seasonal increase in radioactivity is observed in the lower stratum of the atmosphere when agricultural work is undertaken. A short-term increase in total radioactivity in the atmosphere is observed during fires.

5. The Chernobyl accident seriously contaminated forest ecosystems. In Belarus, the area of forest land with soil contamination by caesium-137 of at least 37 kBq/m^2 exceeds 20,000 sq. km.

During the period immediately after the accident, about 80 per cent of all radioactive fallout in forest areas was absorbed by those parts of the tree above ground level.

In subsequent years, while self-cleansing of the tree crown has continued, radionuclides of caesium-137 and strontium-90 have increasingly been absorbed by the tree via the roots. At the present time, 5-7 per cent of the total accumulation of caesium-137 is in forest lands. According to predictions, over the next 10 years, up to 10-15 per cent of radionuclides will accumulate in the trees above ground level. This will present serious problems for forestry, including the question of radiation safety of workers. For the inhabitants of surrounding communities, there are continuing problems with the gathering of berries and mushrooms and the preparation of herbal remedies; warnings aimed at restricting such activities have gone unheeded.

6. The plant world as a whole has shown itself to be resistant to radiation. For most species, no significant changes have been observed in the contaminated zone. The effects of radiation on plant growth have been manifest only where there were abnormally high densities of contamination (above 3,700 kBq/m^2) in the direct proximity of the destroyed reactor. These effects include curvature, deformation, thickened stalks, asymmetry and curling of leaves, increased growth of sideshoots, dwarfism, bushy growth, gigantism, reddish wood and also defects at the cell level (rupture of chromosomes).

7. The accumulation of radionuclides in fauna corresponds to the irradiation of the areas of their habitat.

The cessation of farming in the areas of exclusion and evacuation has been reflected in the range of types and numbers of birds and of mammals for hunting and commercial use. Thanks to the abundant food supply and the absence of pressure from hunting, the number of wolves has risen 4-5 times. There has been a redistribution of the communities and structure of the mammal population, the numbers of which have in recent years tended to diminish. In the drainage areas, there has been growth in the variety of types and numbers of amphibians, reptiles and birds inhabiting the marshlands, forests and scrubland. In terms of wildlife in general, the numbers of some rare animal species have expanded.

The situation regarding parasites requires attention. The variety and numbers of parasites infesting wild birds and small mammals and inhabiting their nests and blood-sucking two-winged insects are higher in the areas contaminated by radionuclides than in neighbouring areas. With the passage of time, a further increase is expected in the number of types having epidemic and epizootic significance.

8. Food products gathered in the forests (mushrooms, berries and nuts) or derived from hunting and fishing traditionally make up a significant part of the diet of the inhabitants of rural areas in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. In the contaminated areas, the radioactivity of radionuclides in such products may exceed health standards many times over.

The radionuclide content of mushrooms and berries (blueberries, cranberries and strawberries) exceeds these standards even in areas with insignificant (less than 37 kBq/m^2) soil contamination. The specific radioactivity of caesium-137 in berries and fresh mushrooms may exceed 20 kBq/kg, in dried mushrooms, 150 kBq/kg, and in the meat of wild animals, 250 kBq/kg, which is hundreds of times above acceptable levels. The concentration of caesium-137 in fish living in lakes and

reservoirs may be of an exceedingly high level, reaching 300 kBq/kg in the case of predatory species.

During the next few years, the radionuclide content of the above-mentioned food products is not expected to fall substantially. Yet, the contribution of these products to the radiation doses absorbed internally by part of the population may reach 70-80 per cent, which presents a serious radiological problem.

9. Persons who participated in clean-up operations following the Chernobyl disaster and those living in areas contaminated by radionuclides received additional doses of radiation ranging from single figures to hundreds of millisieverts (mSv) and, at the same time, as in the past, are subject to chronic radiation in small doses. In 2005, the majority of the population received up to 80 per cent of the dose they might have been expected to receive during their whole lives.

An excessive accumulation of radioactivity in the whole body amounting to 200 mSv in Belarus was observed in the inhabitants of 214 villages who were 1-2 years old at the time of the accident. In 968 villages, the accumulated dose exceeded 70 mSv in this same age range.

The most significant contribution to the aggregate accumulated effective radiation dose was from radionuclides of iodine-131, which depended to a large extent on the person's age at the time of the accident. The contribution of iodine radionuclides to the aggregate accumulated effective radiation dose was up to 80 per cent.

The contribution of strontium radionuclides to the aggregate radiation dose after the Chernobyl accident is not significant (1-4 per cent of the aggregate radiation dose) and that of transuranium elements even less (0.1-1 per cent of the aggregate dose).

A calculation of the radiation doses absorbed by the thyroid gland indicated that the mean doses varied over a wide range from hundreds of grays (Gy) to tens of grays. The maximum radiation doses in the thyroid gland were received by people who were children and adolescents at the time of the accident. These categories of people constitute a group at high risk of developing radiation-induced thyroid cancer.

10. For the period 1986-2004, among people who received radiation in the 0-18-year age range, there were 2,430 cases of thyroid cancer, 2,399 of which were diagnosed since 1990. The highest incidence among children occurred in 1995-1996. During those years, sickness among them was 39 times the figure for 1986. The link between absorbed doses of radiation of the thyroid and the increased rate of thyroid cancer among children and adolescents has been scientifically proved. All those who developed cancer of the thyroid were successfully treated in specialized clinics, as a result of which the death rate has not exceeded 1 per cent. As before, however, these people run a health risk linked with the lifetime taking of hormone preparations. Hence the quality of their lives differs significantly from that of healthy people.

During the period 1986-2004, the rate of thyroid cancer in the adult population increased more than six times, from 1.9 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 1986 to 12.7 cases per 100,000 in 2004. The latest scientific data indicate that, among those

who were adults at the time of the Chernobyl disaster, as among children and adolescents, the dose-effect relationship was of a linear nature.

11. Research has so far not succeeded in establishing a direct link between increased frequency of localized malignant tumours, other than thyroid cancer, and the effect of the initial radiation. This situation stems from the little time that has elapsed from the end of the theoretical minimal latent period, the insufficient lifespan of the population at risk from irradiation and, probably, the peculiarities of the carcinogenic processes resulting from chronic radiation in small doses.

However, it has been noted that the most irradiated groups of disaster relief workers exhibit an excessive rise in illness from cancerous tumours of the lungs, bladder, skin and stomach compared with the control group. The risk of developing malignant tumours in any part of the body among the disaster relief workers is 23 per cent higher than among the unirradiated population. The risk of stomach cancer is 15 per cent higher, colon cancer 33 per cent higher, lung cancer 26 per cent, bladder cancer 65 per cent, kidney cancer 24 per cent and thyroid cancer 2.6 times higher.

There is concern over the statistically significant increase in breast cancer among women living in areas contaminated by radionuclides; the risk of their contracting breast cancer is 25 per cent higher than among the control group. In the contaminated areas, researchers have noted a significant lowering of the age at which breast cancer is contracted. The peak in numbers of cases is reached 15 years earlier and corresponds to the 55-59-year age group, whereas among women of the control group, the age range is 70-74 years. There is a linear correlation between the accumulated radiation dose and the realized relative risk of developing breast cancer.

12. Data indicate a rapid growth of non-oncological illnesses in various categories of the population affected by the disaster, especially among the disaster relief workers. These are autoimmune thyroiditis, cataract and blood-circulation diseases, which (except for cataract) were not, according to existing perceptions, caused by radiation.

13. A statistically reliable excessive incidence of birth defects in the affected regions has not been observed; however, the number of cases registered that require strict monitoring is double that of the pre-accident period.

14. The effects of the Chernobyl disaster on the health of the population are not confined to purely radiological illnesses. The disaster fostered among part of the population of the contaminated areas a false perception of the radiation risk, leading to persistent psychological distress. Anxiety regarding the radiation effects on health is not diminishing. Indeed, it is spreading among broader sections of the population, including those living outside the contaminated areas.

The state of health of children has evoked particular concern in society, and parental anxiety is passed on to the children. In the affected regions, negative demographic trends are emerging. There is a falling birth rate, a rising death rate, and a diminishing number of able-bodied workers.

15. The harmful impact of the Chernobyl disaster on the economy of the countries affected, and especially Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, has been enormous. There has been a marked drop in the utilization of forest, mineral, raw-material and other

resources. A number of farms, enterprises and factories have closed. The majority of those in operation have suffered severe losses from the reduction of output, underutilization of buildings, installations, equipment, drainage systems and production capacity and a lack of qualified workers and managerial staff. Losses of fuel, raw materials and supplies have been substantial.

16. The economic losses incurred from the effects of the Chernobyl disaster for Belarus alone are calculated at US$ 235 billion (assessed over a 30-year period), which is equivalent to 32 times the country's budget for 1985, the year preceding the accident. This includes the loss related to the contamination of the mineral, raw-material, agricultural, water, forest and other resources suffered by industry, agriculture, construction, transport and communications, forestry, housing, municipal services and other branches of the social sector; losses related to the deterioration of the health of the population, as well as additional expenditure incurred in overcoming the consequences of the disaster and ensuring safe living conditions for the population.

17. Agriculture and forestry have been most severely affected. The area under crops has been sharply reduced, crop capacity and gross harvests have declined, and the total number and productivity of livestock have decreased significantly.

More than 1.8 million hectares of arable land in Belarus (about 20 per cent of the total area) were exposed to radioactive contamination with caesium-137 in concentrations greater than 37 kBq/m^2. Of this land, 265,000 hectares have been taken out of agricultural production, forcing the closure of 53 collective and State farms. The losses from this alone exceed US$ 700 million per annum. The annual production shortfall is 641,000 tons of fodder, 256,000 tons of milk, 24,000 tons of meat from large-horned cattle and 24,000 tons of pork (live weight).

Up to 70 per cent of the radionuclides that fell on Belarusian territory are concentrated in the country's forests. Of the 95 forestry-sector establishments, 53 are contaminated to varying degrees. More than 2 million cubic metres of ripe and mature timber stocks are in areas contaminated with caesium-137 in soil concentrations exceeding 555 kBq/m^2, and this figure will reach 3.5 million cubic metres by 2010. In Gomel and Mogilev oblasts, timber harvesting is subject to significant restrictions in areas contaminated with caesium-137 in concentrations exceeding 555 kBq/m^2, and a number of requirements must be fulfilled.

18. The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant left the former Soviet Union and the three most affected republics — Ukraine, Byelorussia and Russia — facing exceptionally complex tasks, first and foremost, ensuring the radiation safety of the population. Addressing these tasks required the immediate mobilization of significant resources, the formulation of an appropriate, priority-based action plan and the clear and systematic organization of both emergency and long-term measures. Large-scale measures were taken to deal with the aftermath at the nuclear power plant itself, decontaminate the areas adjacent to it and evacuate the population. Overall, the response during the initial phase of the accident was appropriate and effective. However, the extraordinary nature of the situation also led to a number of errors or delays, particularly where iodine prophylactic measures are concerned.

The scale of the accident called for the development and implementation by the State of a costly long-term programme of urgent measures to address its

consequences. This Union-Republican programme was carried out in the years 1990-1992.

19. The collapse of the Soviet Union forced its former constituent republics to address the problem of dealing with the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident independently.

In Belarus, where the effects of Chernobyl were greatest in relative terms, three centrally financed State programmes for addressing the consequences of the Chernobyl accident have been carried out since 1993; implementation of the next programme, for the period up to 2010, has begun. The problem of Chernobyl and the health and living conditions of the population in the affected areas are a focus of attention of the legislative and executive authorities and the President of the Republic. A special government body, the Committee on Problems relating to the Consequences of the Accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant under the Council of Ministers of Belarus, is coordinating all activities under way.

20. Expenditure on Chernobyl programmes in Belarus has accounted for a significant proportion of the State budget each year: from 5 to 17 per cent. This has allowed a number of the most important problems to be effectively resolved:

- A legal and regulatory framework has been established covering all aspects of efforts to address the consequences of the accident;
- A significant increase in morbidity among disaster relief workers and members of the public affected by the accident has been prevented thanks to thorough medical examinations, which approximately 1.6 million persons undergo each year, as well as a series of measures to improve the quality of medical care and a large-scale programme of treatment for affected persons at sanatoriums and health resorts;
- The transfer of approximately 138,000 persons out of the most contaminated districts has been virtually completed, and 4.6 million square metres of housing has been built or acquired for the persons transferred, who have now been resettled in new places of residence;
- A system of social protection has been put in place for all categories of the affected population.
- Protective measures in the agroindustrial complex and forestry ensure that production meets radiological standards;
- An effective system has been established for monitoring radiation levels in produce and in the environment;
- Necessary measures are being taken to maintain alienated lands, including the 30-km zone around the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which is now a State radioecological reserve;
- A system has been developed for training and retraining personnel and educating the public about problems of radiation safety;
- Efforts have been organized and are being implemented in the scientific field to deal with the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident. New scientific research centres and institutes have been established and are operating successfully;

- Modern instruments for measuring and monitoring ionizing radiation have been developed and put into industrial production;
- Significant efforts have been made to attract the attention of the international community to the problems posed by the effects of the Chernobyl disaster for the most affected countries.

Nevertheless, the financial capacity of the State is not sufficient to address all the problems in the near future. In order to make good the losses, estimated at 32 times the average annual budget prior to the accident in 1985, Belarus was able to mobilize the equivalent of approximately twice the budget, or about US$ 18 billion.

21. Among the problems that need to be further addressed, the most important is ensuring the radiation safety of the population. The radiation situation in a number of affected regions remains complicated to this day. There are settlements in which the average annual effective doses of additional radiation received by the population as a result of fallout from Chernobyl exceed 1 mSv, which, in accordance with national legislation, calls for further protective measures to be taken. The so-called critical population groups, which may receive radiation doses in excess of 1 mSv and which exist even in relatively safe settlements, require special attention.

22. Large-scale protective measures are still warranted in contaminated districts — without such measures, produce from those districts would not meet radiological standards.

Currently, agricultural production is taking place in Belarus on 1.1 million hectares of arable land contaminated with caesium-137 radionuclides in concentrations of 37 to 1,480 kBq/m^2. This land is owned by 633 agricultural enterprises in 61 administrative districts of the Republic. In addition, in 276 of these enterprises, covering an area of 375,000 hectares, the soil is simultaneously contaminated with strontium-90 in concentrations exceeding 5.5 kBq/m^2.

The radiation situation called for the introduction of special rules, recommendations and restrictions with respect to agricultural production, safe farming practices and production of crops that absorb radionuclides.

23. The strategic goal of the next phase of work is to ensure the radiation-related and environmental rehabilitation of the contaminated areas; to achieve sustainable socio-economic development in those areas, unfettered by restrictions on economic activities owing to the radiation factor; and to create conditions in which persons affected by the Chernobyl accident who live in areas contaminated by radionuclides feel more protected from a social and medical standpoint and enjoy a level of health no lower than that of the general population.

Efforts to achieve the main aim of rehabilitation — genuine economic recovery and sustainable development — must involve continuous monitoring of the environment for radiation, the restoration of the economic potential of affected districts, the introduction in the agroindustrial complex and forestry of advanced production technologies and the enhancement of the well-being of persons living in those districts. This will require the improvement of national approaches and international assistance in restoring the social infrastructure of the affected regions and of areas with high concentrations of evacuated persons.

There remains a pressing need to create favourable conditions for mobilizing domestic and foreign investment and for pursuing in the contaminated regions

innovative social policies that promote economic development, the establishment of small and medium-sized businesses, self-employment and job creation.

Sustainable development in the contaminated areas is impossible without serious support from the State and assistance from international and national partners aimed at improving rural dwellers' personal plots. The development of such plots and of self-employment will contribute to the emotional and psychological recovery of rural communities, increase entrepreneurial activity among villagers, enhance their capacity to adapt to market conditions, raise incomes and reduce dependency on social assistance from the State.

24. The rehabilitation of affected persons is hindered by their psychological state and the fact that they are still ill-informed. Further work needs to be done to improve the system of informing and educating the public about the radiation situation, the effectiveness of countermeasures and other issues; this would help the inhabitants of contaminated areas understand scientific and medical recommendations on safety in daily life. It is important to overcome the "Chernobyl victim" syndrome, which impedes the active involvement of the public in socio-economic activities.

25. The laws and regulations governing, inter alia, the system of social protection of affected persons and the creation of favourable economic conditions for the development of contaminated areas need to be improved and refined, taking account of international recommendations.

26. Given the complexity and diversity of the problems arising from the Chernobyl disaster, a high level of appropriate scientific research should be maintained. The current priorities are set out below.

In order to clarify the role of the radiation factor in the possible increase in oncological disease, it is necessary to conduct carefully planned, long-term radioepidemiological studies. There remain significant difficulties in reconstructing the individual doses to which disaster relief workers were exposed. The problem of the increase in non-oncological diseases (cataracts, cardiovascular diseases, etc.) in relief workers and in affected members of the public should also be studied.

Work is continuing on the development of organizational, agrochemical and farming-related measures and technologies designed to ensure that agricultural produce from personal plots, private farms and the public sector meets non-contamination standards.

A scientifically sound strategy for the maintenance and possible exploitation of evacuated areas is needed.

To date, no thorough study has been conducted of the biological effects of small radiation doses, the combined effect of radiation and other factors and the impact of the current situation on the environment and biota.

The Polesye State radioecological reserve in Belarus requires greater attention. It is the only site used for research into the impact of radiation on natural biocoenoses and the self-purification processes of natural communities. The data obtained should be used to forecast the consequences of the prolonged action of radionuclides on wildlife and to develop rational ways of protecting the environment and planning economic activities in rehabilitated areas.

The characteristics of the distribution and behaviour of radionuclides of plutonium and americium in ecosystems require clarification for the purpose of assessing the state of the natural environment and forecasting the radiation situation.

27. The dose monitoring system needs to be improved by making the best use of instrumental measurements of the radionuclide content of objects in the environment and radionuclide levels in the human body, and by identifying critical areas and population groups.

Metrological support for the radiation monitoring system needs to be developed in accordance with the international standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) system, including programmes for assuring the quality of radiation measurements. The current objective is to re-equip the system with modern instruments that meet the requirements of the most stringent existing and emerging regulations for the radionuclide content of produce, and also to ensure a high level of accuracy of measurements, in accordance with the international system for the certification of produce.

28. Effective international cooperation is an important component of efforts to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster. The Conference notes the international community's significant contribution to those efforts and the fresh impetus given to the work in recent years.

The most influential and significant documents on international cooperation with regard to Chernobyl are the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. The Conference notes the positive nature of resolution 60/14, "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", adopted by the General Assembly on 14 November 2005 at its sixtieth session. A total of 69 States sponsored the draft resolution — the clearest indication of the importance which the international community attaches to addressing the problems of Chernobyl.

29. The Conference supports the initiative of the Republic of Belarus regarding the declaration of a United Nations "decade of rehabilitation and sustainable development of Chernobyl-affected areas", to be coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

30. The Conference notes the substantial experience accumulated by Belarusian experts in overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the volume of scientific data on the impact of nuclear radiation collected and systematized by Belarusian scientists. It also welcomes the participation of Belarus in the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR).

The Conference proposes that the General Assembly should consider expanding the membership of UNSCEAR.

31. In the period 1990-2001, the Chernobyl issue was included in the cooperation programmes of the major international organizations of the United Nations system, such as UNDP, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO), and others including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent

States and Georgia (TACIS) programme of the European Union and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Arrangements were made for cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations in Switzerland, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United States of America and Japan.

According to United Nations estimates, the aid provided to the Republic of Belarus by United Nations system organizations during the above-mentioned period amounted to about US$ 45 million; more than US$ 2 million was received under the TACIS programme, and a further US$ 6.5 million from the European Community Humanitarian Office.

Through private channels, the Republic of Belarus has every year received, and continues to receive, foreign donations in the form of goods worth about US$ 50 million (chiefly from Germany, Italy, the United States, Switzerland, China and a number of other countries).

However, aid to the most affected countries has primarily been provided as part of standard humanitarian operations in response to emergency situations.

32. Bilateral treaty relations have been implemented in a practical and consistent way only between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation by carrying out programmes of joint activities to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster within the Union State.

These programmes are aimed at establishing and implementing a single policy for the two States on dealing with Chernobyl-related problems. In the course of programme implementation, objectives that complement the national programmes and that require the combined efforts of both States are being pursued. These include the development, enhancement and operation of a single system for the provision of specialized medical assistance to affected persons; the establishment and practical implementation of uniform approaches to the rehabilitation of people and land; the elaboration and implementation of uniform standards and of the most effective technologies; and the implementation of other measures with a sound economic basis.

The Conference participants from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus note that the measures taken have been highly effective and they propose to push ahead with the elaboration of a new programme of joint activities to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster within the Union State.

The Conference emphasizes the need to intensify cooperation to deal with problems relating to the consequences of the disaster in the three most affected countries — the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus — through joint programmes and projects, among other things.

33. Fundamentally new approaches to the provision of assistance to the affected States were set out in the report of a United Nations mission entitled "The human consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident: a strategy for recovery". For the first time, the report recommends a shift of priorities in international cooperation relating to Chernobyl, from the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance to a long-term process of promoting comprehensive rehabilitation in the affected areas. Such an approach should now be regarded as universally accepted at the

international level. This is confirmed by the findings of the international Chernobyl Forum, which were presented at a concluding conference held in Vienna on 6 and 7 September 2005, and by the outcome of the present Conference.

34. The Conference welcomes the innovative nature of the international technical assistance programme Cooperation for Rehabilitation (CORE), which is a new-generation programme incorporated in the United Nations strategy to support socio-economic development in the affected areas.

35. The Conference notes the emergence of a new area of post-Chernobyl international cooperation — a joint project involving the World Bank and the Government of Belarus for the rehabilitation of areas affected by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster. The provision of a loan by the World Bank towards efforts to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster opens a new phase of cooperation, based on a transition from grant assistance to credit projects.

36. The Conference emphasizes the importance of maintaining active, targeted efforts to report on Chernobyl-related issues in the media so as to provide the public around the world with objective information about the consequences of the disaster and the problems that need to be addressed.

37. The Conference conveys greetings to the participants of the forthcoming international conference in Kyiv and proposes that it should endorse the main provisions of these conclusions and recommendations and consolidate efforts to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

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Item 52 (b) of the preliminary list*
Sustainable development: follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2006
Geneva, 3-28 July 2006
Item 13 (a) of the provisional agenda**
Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development

Letter dated 13 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Seychelles to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the final report of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) Regional Meeting to follow up on implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (see annex), held in Baie Lazare, Seychelles, from 26 to 28 October 2005.

On behalf of the small island developing States that participated in the meeting, I request that the present letter and its annex be issued as a document of the Economic and Social Council, under item 13 (a) of the provisional agenda, and of the General Assembly, under agenda item 52 (b) of the preliminary list for the sixty-first session, and that it be made available to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourteenth session.

(*Signed*) Jérémie **Bonnelame**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/61/50.
** E/2006/100 to be issued.

06-32883 (E) 050506

Annex to the letter dated 13 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Seychelles to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The AIMS Regional Meeting to follow up on implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

Seychelles, 26-28 October 2005

The AIMS Regional Meeting to Follow-up on Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy was convened in Seychelles from 26th to 28th October 2005 at the Plantation Club Hotel, Baie Lazare. The meeting was attended by Cape Verde, Comoros, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Singapore, the Indian Ocean Commission (COI), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), UNESCO, UNAIDS, FAO, Global Forum of Oceans, Coasts and Islands, Liaison Unit of NGOs (LUNGOS) and Centre de Documentation et Recherche et Formation Indianoceanique (CEDREFI). The meeting noted the absence of Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe whose participation was expected. The meeting also noted that Bahrain, Cyprus and Malta had expressed through their Permanent Representatives to the UN the wish not to be represented. The donor community were invited by UNDESA to attend but were not represented. The list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

The meeting was convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/311 calling inter alia for the three regional follow-up meetings.

The opening session was chaired by Mr Claude Morel, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Statements were made by Ms. Diane Quarless, Chief of the SIDS Unit, (UNDESA), Madame Monique Andreas-Esoavelomandroso, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission (COI), and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles, His Excellency The Honorouable Patrick Pillay. The statements are attached in annex 2 of the report.

Mr Claude Morel, Seychelles was elected Chairman of the Meeting, Cape Verde was elected Vice-Chairman, Mauritius was elected as Rapporteur with support from Seychelles, COI and UNDESA.

The purpose of the meeting was to review and evaluate progress in the region and instill a renewed resolve for taking action on the sustainable development priorities for the AIMS region.

Session 1 – Setting the Scene

The session was held on the 26th October, and was facilitated by Mr Claude Morel, MFA. The objective of the first session was to review priorities and mechanisms for implementing the UN MS at national, regional international and levels.

Presentations were made by Ms Diane Quarless (UNDESA, UN SIDS Unit) and Madame Monique Andreas-Esoavelomandroso Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission (COI), and brief national updates were given by country participants.

Statements and questions raised by Mauritius, Seychelles, Cape Verde, Comoros, Singapore, Maldives, COI, FAO, UNESCO and CEDREFI.

It was recalled that the SIDS themselves are primarily responsible for implementing BPoA and MSI, but require in the process the effective support of the donor community and relevant IGOs.

The role of the UN system should also be considered for how best support should be mobilized for the implementation of the MSI. The Inter-regional SIDS Meeting to be held in Rome in November 2005 would in this context constitute an important opportunity for the region. It was also recommended that the Rome meeting be discussed in the context of developing proposals for AIMS regional and national action, so that priority activities and projects/programmes could be brought forward. Rome will also give important consideration to SIDS-SIDS cooperation.

While the AIMS region is very diverse with historic, geographic and social differences of the Member States, there are many similarities in the impacts of the challenges faced by the AIMS SIDS that draw the group together in cooperation for sustainable development.

It was noted that improvements in communication between AIMS is needed and the process to develop a coordinating mechanism needs to take this into account, as well as having a process for effective resource mobilization. It was reaffirmed that COI has been playing an important coordinating role as the interim secretariat, yet is constrained by resources in further expanding services. The AIMS website has been launched through the COI structures. It was noted that the COI have proposed to utilize this information portal to publish an AIMS regional bulletin. Consideration should be given to also entrusting this portal as the regional hub for SIDSNet.

The challenges faced by AIMS SIDS are far greater than many of them can tackle by themselves and would thus clearly benefit from cooperation and inter-SIDS solidarity. Issues such as natural disasters and climate change are often beyond AIMS SIDS means.

Noting that the UN GA at its 59th session has now endorsed the MSI, and given a mandate to the UN system to ensure that the MSI is implemented in a coordinated manner, there is a need for the SIDS regions to articulate their concerns. The UN agencies have been constituted in an Inter-agency Consultative Group (IACG) chaired by DESA, and focal points were encouraged to be established in each of the UN agencies.

Participants noted that OHRLLS has a mandate in support of SIDS, but is strictly circumscribed to advocacy for SIDS, while DESA/DSD has responsibility through the SIDS Unit on substantive matters. It was agreed that as a matter of priority and in accordance with GA resolutions substantial strengthening of the SIDS Unit would be pursued at the highest levels, including at the Rome meeting, as would be the need for coordination of the SIDS Unit with OHRLLS, in such a way that

OHRLLS advocacy would be informed by the concerns and challenges of the SIDS regions, in particular the AIMS region.

Many delegations continued to express concern at the lack of international support for SIDS, which requires greater commitment from the UN and its specialized agencies and a strengthening of national and regional mechanisms. It was stressed that national and regional mechanisms would be enhanced with concomitant improvement in the international level coordination and cooperation for SIDS.

It was also recommended that in defining the regional support mechanism for AIMS consideration of linking AIMS to the UN system should be pursued. The region should also review how the specialized agencies can and are contributing to sustainable development in AIMS. Channels of communication between AIMS and the UN system should be reviewed with a view to improvement.

The national dialogue highlighted the need to establish or strengthen national processes for sustainable development and called for technical and financial support to such processes, as well as sharing of information of experiences and best practices through the COI portal. In many cases while there is a committee structure at national level for sustainable development there is a need to amend the functioning of such committees to become more of an executive board or executive body with both technical skills and access to funds to achieve targets for sustainable development. This would ensure the linking of for example national road maps for sustainable development to government policy, and for promoting inter-ministerial cooperation. It was also noted that cooperation modalities such as the Seychelles post-tsunami reconstruction and relief efforts could be of interest to the other SIDS.

The Singapore technical assistance program is being extended in the multiplicity of areas within which Singapore has expertise for another 5 years as SIDSTecII (for details see www.mfa.gov.sg/scp/).

It was noted that a number of projects are being launched in support of the MSI, as exemplified by the UNESCO continuing work on education for sustainable development and the work of other international organization. Clarifications were sought as to the degree to which international organizations are providing actual financial resources to these projects and initiatives.

Session 2- Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and the Regional Perspective

The session was held on the 26th October, and was facilitated by Dr J. L Roberts (COI). The Objective of this session was to identify how national, regional and international partners can best work together for the pursuit of MDGs and the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Presentations were made on three models of programme management; 'HIV/ AIDS' by Dr. Joy Backory UNAIDS, 'Disaster Management' by: J.L Roberts and 'Oceans and Coastal Management' by Dr. Nirmal Jivan Shah.

Statements were made and questions raised by Seychelles, Cape Verde, Mauritius, FAO, UNDESA and UNESCO.

It was noted that it would be of interest to AIMS to promote evidence based programme management, and four model papers were presented on different themes highly relevant to SIDS in this regard, namely:

- Priority setting and MDGs (a deconstruction of the MDG framework): presented by Dr J L Roberts of COI
- Knowledge based approach for the better response to HIV/AIDS: paper presented by Dr Joy Backory on behalf of the COI/AIMS/UNAIDS partnership
- Disaster management: paper presented by Dr J L Roberts on the Commonwealth Secretariat report commissioned following the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami
- Oceans and Coastal Management: paper presented on behalf of the Global Forum on Ocean Coasts and islands

In developing evidence based plans it was recognised that there exists a wide range in stages of development of AIMS countries and their capacity for adaptation. This highlights the need to see the limitations of the MDGs as tools for priority setting and resource allocation and hence the need for careful examination of their use in defining fields for cooperative approaches for the AIMS. While MDG implementation would benefit from an evidence based approach to the diagnosis and selection of most appropriate interventions, there should also be consideration of adapting the MDGs to more relevant development goals at national level.

Participants noted that prerequisites for successful implementation of the MDGs and the MSI include clear support from the Member States, the AIMS coordination mechanism and from donors. Consideration should be given to the recruitment of a facilitating team. All AIMS SIDS need to have national focal point who should ideally be a member of a national multisectoral coordination committee/mechanism. Funding support needs to be secured on a predictable basis, and ideally should have at least some national commitment. Regional action frameworks must be clearly linked with regional strategies and actions as well as national priorities and needs. National projects would in many cases not have been eligible for support from international sources, hence the benefit in having regional projects. But regional projects must start with an appropriate acknowledgement of national priorities and needs, and should build on national reports and needs assessments, such as the GEF national capacity self-assessments and the national sustainable development strategies called for at the Mauritius International Meeting.

Participants highlighted the need to establish standing mechanisms at national level to be responsible for implementation of sustainable development. The development of appropriate indicators for gauging progress in implementation would assist building effective institutions and cooperation between AIMS SIDS.

UNESCO and FAO suggested working with NEPAD as a means of making progress with implementing systems for using renewable sources of energy for production and for investment in the agricultural sector. FAO recommended that the SIDS forum promote the implementation of the mid-term investment program in the agricultural sector. UNESCO recommended use of the training

program in the Pacific, which shows the requirements for very particular skills for delineating claims to exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and for settling boundary issues.

The creation of a AIMS panel experts for deployment in the region and for staff training was also suggested.

Session 3 – Institutions and Co-ordination

The session was held on the 27th October, and was facilitated by Dr.J.L Roberts (COI).
The objective of this session was to review the planning, financing and management mechanisms for implementing of the MSI, at national, regional and international levels and to note the progress made with the national sustainable development strategies. Presentations were made by Ms. Diane Quarless (UNDESA), Mr Rolph Payet (Seychelles), Ms. Gina Bonne (COI) and short interventions by country participants.

National sustainable development strategies or their equivalent have been called for since Agenda 21, up to WSSD and MIM. The rationale for sustainable development strategies requires balancing the three pillars but also balancing the participation of stakeholders and coordination with government. A model NSDS consists of a coordinated set of participatory and continuously evolving processes of analysis, debate, decision-making, capacity development, planning, investment, monitoring and evaluation, which seeks to integrate the short and long term economic, social and environmental objectives of society, through mutually supportive approaches wherever possible - managing trade offs where this is not possible.

There should be a move starting from a broader awareness of sustainable development through better coherence and coordination in the short term, to full integration of the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental).

To be effective it was recommended that there should be a shift from government control of the sustainable development agenda to a greater engagement with stakeholders (at least partial engagement in the short term) and shared responsibility of implementation.

There should be a shift from sectoral approaches towards the development of cross-sectoral approaches and ultimately to a fully implemented cross-sectoral approach.

The principles of sustainable development should be promoted in ways that everyone can understand.

In the discussion of national circumstances it was noted that while great progress has been made in many AIMS SIDS on the MDG targets there are still challenges such as pockets of poverty and life-style related diseases. There were also certain important cross-cutting issues. These included the need for building capacities and specialization which are difficult to accomplish in small states which may lack tertiary education and professional training institutions. Other gaps in capacity included skills in performance review and the development of effective partnerships between the public and private sectors. New forms of institutional development were necessary to fill these gaps common to many

SIDS. The development of national indicators to track progress in aspects of development peculiar to small states is however a necessary task to more accurately reflect the national circumstances, development needs and progress made.

Sustainable financing could be considered through the establishment of trust funds, but requires a strategy for resource mobilization. More thought needs to be given to the mechanisms for promoting progress towards MDGs and the types of incentives that might be most effective so that people were encouraged to take action rather than viewing changes as an imposition.

It was important to have a legally defined framework for ensuring effective and meaningful participation of all stakeholders in planning and implementation of sustainable development. Consultative processes must take into account the different working procedures of civil society and governments, as well as the changes in personnel that regularly occur in governments and in NGOs.

Consideration of possible regional mechanism

It was noted that the current situation of staffing at COI may only be continued for 10 months. There is a need to mobilize funds for meetings and consultative processes, and this requires a political process and a commitment from the non-COI SIDS to proceed with any proposed programmes. For this reason an operating arrangement may be required to be developed.

It was also important to note that the future political forum for governing the AIMS partnership needs to be made clear. Questions were raised in relation to the differences in membership between COI and AIMS whether it is possible to differentiate the activities of COI for COI alone versus activities of COI in support of AIMS.

It was also noted that there is a need also to get the views of the absent AIMS countries.

It was agreed that technical planning should continue whilst consultation proceeded on the nature and scope of a more formal management agreement for the AIMS Group. There was agreement that three parallel processes would be pursued, namely the development of technical plans for the AIMS Group, proposals for a more formal management framework, and fund raising for implementing the technical programme and to ensure that appropriate participation at a future ministerial meeting can be assured.

COI have prepared options for the content of future technical programmes, but the Group called for a series of political (governance) discussions on future management arrangements. The Group asked the COI to consult the AIMS Group in advance of formal ministerial discussions to finalize a proposal on the future regional programme and management arrangements as per annex 3 of the report.

Session 4 – Work Programmes

The session was held on 27th October. The objective of the session was to identify the common national priorities, to agree on the outline work programme and to propose specific areas for partnership for implementation. Mr. Espen Ronneberg (UNDESA) gave brief information about the

University Consortium of the Small Island States, Ms. Gina Bonne (COI) presented options for the AIMS Group Programme and Ms Diane Quarless (UNDESA) on the MSI Matrix.

The University Consortium of the Small Island States (UC-SIS) was noted as an important capacity building opportunity, and progress in the development of near, medium and long term aspects would be circulated to all SIDS.

In terms of the DESA matrix, the participants looked at the actionable mandates and what current programs, or planned activities would arise because of MSI, that could be used as the key information for the SIDS to access resources. Focal points would be established in most agencies, and a commitment given to meeting regularly and updating information. For this purpose the agencies will also have to provide funds.

The comprehensive completed matrix will provide information to the countries and agencies to see where support can be found, provided that the integration of sectors perspective is maintained. Participants also noted the information from UNDP on the changing ethos of assistance away from projects to a more programmatic approach through direct support to government and IGO budgets. There is therefore a need to look at the programme priorities for AIMS with a view to identifying supporting partners in the UN system.

Participants noted that having an AIMS secretariat would also be helpful to ensure that the UN serves the AIMS region more adequately and effectively. It is also important to ensure that there are complementarities in the activities of the different agencies.

Session 5 – Country work programmes and their regional and international support Requirements.

The session was held on 27th October and facilitated by Mr. Rolph Payet (Seychelles) and Dr.JL Roberts (COI). The objective of the session was to introduce the draft work programme Matrix proposed by Seychelles, as a tool for review of the scope and content of national programmes for sustainable development and their regional and international support requirements.

Seven priority issues were identified by the participants – HIV/AIDS, disaster management, water and food security, oceans and coasts, climate change and sea level rise, and trade. Three working groups were established to look at the priorities.

The main issues and actions recommended from the working groups were as follows: Support national efforts to complete the delimitation of maritime boundaries; support programmes to strengthen the monitoring, reporting, enforcement and control of fishing vessels to reduce incidences of IUU fishing; acquisition and installation of surveillance and monitoring equipment; support efforts to early ratification and accession to relevant fishing agreements; support the design and implementation of integrated policies for the management of MPA's; support national and regional initiatives on adaptation to climate change and appropriate technology; action on the Clean Development Mechanism; review or strengthen national and regional strategies including public

education to control and combat HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases taking into account country and regional specificities; seek and enhance partnerships for programmes to combat HIV/AIDS with national, and regional entities with international development partners, relevant UN agencies ie. WHO, UNESCO, UNAIDS; Water: to broaden access to water for all SIDS; to enhance SIDS-SIDS Cooperation; International Community Support for Capacity Building; ntegrated water Resources Management through different initiatives; Food security: Enabling environment for food security, self reliance and agricultural diversification; Seed production & integrated pest management; Promotion of agro-industry; Promotion of aquaculture; Promote research and development and use of modern technologies; Ensure affordable provision of essential nutrition; Management of waste: promote sustainable waste management; best practices & innovative solutions to waste management; control of transboundary movement hazardous waste; disposal of quantity of waste at sea (London Dumping Convention); trade; and natural disasters.

Recommendations of the working groups are detailed in annex 4 and form an integral part of this report.

Session 6 – Way forward

The last session was held on the 28th October. The Objective of this session was to identify the milestones in the process for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, the national, regional and international programmes. Presentations were made by UNDESA SIDS Unit on the main conclusions of the other regional meetings, on the Linkages of the CSD14/15 themes and by FAO on the ministerial meeting on SIDS 18 November 2005.

Statements and questions were made by Mauritius, COI, FAO and UNESCO.

UNDESA presented a summary of the conclusions and recommendation adopted by the Caribbean and Pacific regional meetings.

It was noted that the 14th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD14) offers an opportunity to highlight the link between climate change, energy, atmosphere and industrial development through innovative options. For example if SIDS themselves show how biofuel can be a substitute for fossil fuel, this promotes to the international community options they can take to decrease the use of fossil fuels that are at present contributing to Climate Change.

Participants acknowledged that energy is a key factor in the sustainable development of SIDS and their levels of foreign exchange. To increasing SIDS resilience to external factors such as oil prices, requires innovation and examination of best practices in making better use of local resources.

Engaging research through SIDS-SIDS partnerships such as the University Consortium can facilitate sharing of experiences and appropriate technologies to promote biofuels.

AIMS SIDS can learn from each other and other SIDS regions. The use of biofuels in the Pacific region is a good example of the feasibility of such initiatives which can be shared. There are many

solutions within the AIMS region to sustainable use of resources and substitution for costly imported products and these need to be highlighted. There are many innovative ideas that need to be explored particularly through SIDS-SIDS cooperation.

Participants noted though that all islands are different and there are no single solutions for all. What is important is to promote review of alternative and to stimulate innovation. Participants strongly urged that renewable energy and energy efficiency programmes to be pursued as a matter of priority and called for international support in this regard.

FAO made an introduction to the Special Ministerial event to be held on 18 November 2005 on Food Security and Sustainable Development in SIDS, and highlighted the specific actions undertaken in support of the SIDS. Participants noted FAO's initiatives in the Regional Food Security Programmes in the Pacific and Caribbean regions and requested similar initiative for the AIMS region to be raised in the Ministerial Meeting referred to above.

Conclusion of the meeting

The session was held on 28th October, and was chaired by the Chairman. The report of the meeting was presented by the Rapporteur. Statements were made and questions raised by Seychelles, Mauritius, Cape Verde, Maldives, COI, CEDREFI, FAO, UNAIDS, UNESCO and UNDESA.

The background documentation from the meeting was considered very helpful by the participants, and will be put on a master CD. This will be distributed to participants as well as posted on the AIMS website with hyperlinks to more detailed material available elsewhere (www.coi-inf.org click on AIMS), including the AIMS Synthesis report and the AIO report (now in English, French and Portuguese). In addition, the UN DESA road map provides a timetable of events in the process of implementation from 2005-2006.

Singapore, on behalf of all the delegates, thanked the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur, and the host Government and the people of Seychelles for the excellent arrangements for the meeting.

Diane Quarless expressed deep appreciation on behalf of UNDESA for the cooperation and excellent conditions for the meeting, thanked the COI and the UN system representatives for their cooperative spirit and wished the delegates safe travel home.

Gina Bonne expressed the thanks of the COI to the Seychelles Government, the UN system colleagues and the delegates for their excellent contributions to a successful meeting.

The Chairman made a closing statement, highlighting the success of the meeting and the progress achieved, noting the spirit expressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles in his statement, and thanked the organizing committee and Secretariats for their hard work, and declared the meeting closed.

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Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development

Letter dated 13 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the final report of the Caribbean Regional Meeting to follow up implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, held in Frigate Bay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, from 5 to 7 October 2005 (see annex).

On behalf of the small island developing States participating in that meeting, I request that the report be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under item 52 (b) of the preliminary list of its sixty-first session, and of the ECOSOC, and that it be made available at the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

(*Signed*) Joseph **Christmas**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations

* A/61/50.
** E/2006/100.

06-31378 (E) 280406

Annex to the letter dated 13 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Caribbean Regional Meeting to follow up implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

Saint Kitts and Nevis, 5-7 October 2005

The Caribbean Regional Meeting to follow up on implementation of the Mauritius Strategy was convened in Saint Kitts and Nevis from 5 to 7 October 2005 at the Marriott Saint Kitts Resort and Royal Beach Casino. The meeting was attended by Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico and United States Virgin Islands, the Caribbean Community secretariat (CARICOM), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States secretariat (OECS), the Association of Caribbean States secretariat (ACS), the Caribbean Regional Negotiation Machinery (CRNM), the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Relief Agency (CDERA), the University of the West Indies (UWI), the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), the subregional headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Caribbean (ECLAC-POS), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Caribbean Conservation Alliance (CCA), CPDC, Caribbean Civil Society Forum (CCSF), Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST), Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN), the Caribbean Water Partnership (CWP), the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, Coalition for Community Participation in Governance Jamaica and the Non-Governmental Organizations Women's Resource and Outreach Centre Jamaica.

The opening session was chaired by Ms. Shirley Skerritt-Andrews, Ministry of Sustainable Development. Welcoming remarks were given by Ms. Diane Quarless, Chief of the Small Island Developing States Unit, of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Thomas Gittens, on behalf of the UNDP Resident Representative and Resident Coordinator for Barbados and OECS, Mr. Neil Pierre, Director of the subregional headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Caribbean, and Ms. Lolita Applewaite, Deputy Secretary-General of the CARICOM secretariat. A keynote address was given by His Excellency the Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Commerce of Saint Kitts and Nevis. The vote of thanks was given by Mr. Carlisle Richardson, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations.

Panel presentation and policy dialogue on critical challenges and opportunities to be addressed by the region

The session was held on 5 October, and was facilitated by Mr. Thomas Gittens, UNDP. Ms. Shirley Skerritt-Andrews of Saint Kitts and Nevis was elected Chairman

of the Meeting. Mr. Hector Conde Almeida of Cuba and Mr. Roland Antonius of Netherlands Antilles were elected Vice-Chairmen, and Ms. Henna Uiterloo of Suriname was elected as Rapporteur.

Panel presentations were made by Mr. Franklin McDonald, Dr. LaVerne Ragster, Dr. Leonard Nurse and Mr. Gordon Bispham. Statements were made and questions raised by CEHI, OECS secretariat, Cuba, Saint Lucia, Guyana, Suriname, Barbados, CKLN, CDERA, Trinidad and Tobago, Netherlands Antilles, CARICOM secretariat and responses were given by the panellists.

Mr. Franklin McDonald gave an overview of the priorities and continuing needs of the region, focusing in particular on marine, coastal and natural resources. Dr. LaVerne Ragster focused on capacity-building possibilities for the region with emphasis on the newly proposed University Consortium. Dr. Leonard Nurse elaborated the role of UWI in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Mr. Gordon Bispham gave perspectives on the importance of continued civil society participation in the articulation of national strategies towards the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

During discussion, the following were highlighted:

- There are training and capacity-building needs at all levels;
- There is also a need to place emphasis on training persons who are actual practitioners;
- There is an absence of a mechanism for best practices and information and skills sharing at the regional level, which has led to the perception that sustainable development was being implemented in a fragmented manner;
- The need for an enhanced reporting mechanism in the region;
- The need to revise systems of land classification for environmental planning, improvement of regulatory arrangements for land use management and the enhancement of physical development plans;
- Further development of regional and local area plans for disaster mitigation;
- The need to adhere to existing standards such as building codes;
- Continued attention to coastal zone and water resource management;
- There is need for greater integration of the private sector in sustainable development strategies;
- Importance was given to building economic competitiveness and social resilience, and the need to focus on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction plans;
- Consideration of measures to implement the MEAs;
- The need for partnerships between government agencies, private sector and regional universities for capacity-building;
- Consideration should be given to framing sustainable development plans within CSME. In this regard there is need for further analysis on how the social and environmental programmes will be impacted by CSME;
- The need to coordinate environmental standards across the region;

- The importance of generating relevant data for decision-making; and
- The need to improve synergies among regional organizations in areas of importance to SIDS.

Consideration of integrated approaches to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation-linkages and synergies between sectors, using climate change, energy, atmosphere and industrial development as examples

The session was held on 6 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Presentations were made by Ms. Skerritt-Andrews, Dr. Hugh Sealy and Professor Albert Henry Binger. Statements were made and questions raised by Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, Haiti, CCA, CEHI, Guyana, CCSF, UNDP, CCST, CARICOM secretariat, ECLAC-POS, CWC, and ACS secretariat.

Ms. Shirley Skerritt-Andrew and Dr. Hugh Sealy described the experiences of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Barbados in their implementation of a national mechanism for the implementation of a national sustainable development strategy. Their experiences underscored the following:

- The importance of an integrated rather than sectoral approach to programming for sustainable development;
- The challenges of limited human resource capacity in specialized fields such as GIS, building management and environmental impact assessment;
- Note was made that CARICOM has a technical assistance programme, subsumed under the Work Programme of CSME. This is an entry point that could be expanded to take on board the needs of sustainable development, as noted by the meeting;
- The need for reconciling policymaking functions with practical implementation;
- The continuing need for financial resources at the national level;
- The desirability of establishing a pool of regional experts for deployment on short-term assignments in the service of national Governments;
- The importance of developing national sustainable development policies The Barbados Model was based on the following principles and objectives: quality of life; conservation of resources — recognizing that there are bio-physical limits to growth; determining the carrying capacity of the island; ensuring economic efficiency and equity. It should also ensure true participation of all stakeholders;
- The importance of developing sustainable development indicators.

Professor Binger discussed the importance of maximizing synergies among sectors to build resilience in small States, using as example the energy, tourism, agriculture, wastewater and land management. He also discussed the importance to SIDS of improving energy efficiency and on developing alternate energy sources, with emphasis on OTEC. He noted that SIDS tend to discount the vast resource that the oceans offer as an energy option. He also presented a case study on the use of sugar cane as biofuel for electricity production. He highlighted the importance of cutting import expenses for fuel which would in turn lead to social and economic

benefits. SIDS should carry out energy audits, resource evaluation and energy usage profiles. They should assess and take action on the most suitable renewable energy and energy efficiency measures available. OTEC and biomass were in his view the most promising applications, but there is also ample scope for using simple solar applications.

Consideration of a regional mechanism/consultative framework for most effective, coordinated, coherent implementation of the implementation of the BPOA/MSI

The session was held on 6 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Presentations were made by Mr. Arthur Gray (ECLAC-POS) and Ms. Glenda Itiaba (CARICOM secretariat). Statements were made and questions raised by Trinidad and Tobago, ACS secretariat, CEHI, Guyana, CSTC, CCSF, CPDC, CDERA, ECLAC-POS, CRNM and CCA.

The session was continued on 7 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Statements were made and questions raised by Saint Lucia, Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Montserrat, Guyana, Netherlands Antilles, Cuba, OECS secretariat, UWI, CDERA, CPDC, Grenada, CCA, CCSF, ECLAC-POS and CARICOM secretariat.

The presentations from ECLAC-POS and CARICOM secretariat described the region's experience in attempting to establish a permanent regional coordinating mechanism to support national implementation of sustainable development and the Barbados Programme of Action. They made recommendations on possible approaches for the creation of a new mechanism.

The meeting reaffirmed that there was need for a regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the BPOA/MSI. It should be pan-Caribbean in scope, and should mirror national coordination efforts and reflect national priorities. Some functions of the mechanism were discussed such as coordination of implementation across the region through liaison with Governments and agencies, provision of advice on global and regional sustainable development issues for Governments, agencies and civil society, identification of transboundary issues for the region, and supporting national implementation via technical and other resources, arranging and coordinating consultative meetings. Furthermore, there was a need to establish commonly agreed sustainable development indicators to be utilized by the mechanism for reporting and monitoring purposes.

It was noted that there should be a clear political directorate for oversight, as well as a need for agreement on the functions of the mechanism, to identify gaps in the region. The very serious issues of coordination at the national level and reporting need to be addressed.

It was noted that SIDS and regional agencies should apply the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation to their current activities and development plans. It was suggested that a meeting could convene at end of CARICOM Council as a Caribbean sustainable development council. Other alternatives could also be explored. It was concluded that the mechanism needs to be financially sustainable and properly resourced. Finally it was emphasized that the mechanism should promote cooperation among the countries of the region.

A core group was established for considering elements for the new mechanism, with the following members: ACS secretariat, ECLAC-POS, CARICOM secretariat, OECS secretariat, United States Virgin Islands, Saint Lucia, Belize (not present), Cuba, Jamaica, Guyana, CCA (facilitating and coordinating with NGOs, CAIC and CCL).

Consideration of national mechanisms and frameworks for most effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action/Mauritius Strategy for Implementation

The session was held on 7 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Statements were made by Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Dominica, Jamaica, Guyana and Saint Lucia. A number of countries presented their experiences with national coordination of sustainable development issues. Key principles identified for constructive processes include transparency, inclusiveness of all stakeholders, and adequate resources. Some countries emphasized that sustainable development principles had been included in their national planning processes, including consideration of cultural aspects to development. While there were many best practices identified, it was recognized that each individual country must adapt these according to its national circumstances.

Consideration of programmes for operationalization of the MSI with focus on regional and subregional programming based on priorities identified by the region

The session was held on 7 October, and was chaired by the Chairman. Presentations were made by the CARICOM secretariat and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Statements were made and questions raised by United States Virgin Islands, Guyana and Cuba.

Conclusion of the meeting

The session was held on 7 October, and was chaired by the Chairman. The report of the meeting was presented by the Rapporteur. Statements were made and questions raised by CPDC and Netherlands Antilles. A clarification was given by the Secretariat. The Chairman proposed that the report of the meeting be adopted by acclamation and that the Rapporteur be entrusted with completing the editing of the report supported by the secretariats, for subsequent circulation to all participants.

CARICOM also circulated their document on partnerships for sustainable development in the Caribbean Region which documented a series of partnership proposals developed by the region in preparation for the Mauritius International Meeting. A youth caucus representative presented a statement on behalf of civil society participants.

The Chairman thanked the organizers and declared the meeting closed.